



## **“Youth Against Violence Program”**

**In March of 2007, Chief Joe Whisenant recognized that the City of Douglasville was beginning to experience an influx of gang-related crimes. In response, Chief Whisenant created the city’s first gang unit.**

**The first mission of the gang unit was to travel to surrounding jurisdictions making inquiries about the severity of their gang problems and how those jurisdictions were investigating gang crimes. The Douglasville Police Department’s Gang Unit realized the importance of working with and sharing intelligence with other agencies concerning gangs, but quickly identified a major problem. While there seemed to be plenty of gang instruction resources for law enforcement, gang prevention directed at the youth and their parents by law enforcement was lacking.**

**In March 2007 the Douglasville Police Department identified 13 gangs within its jurisdictional boundaries, which were involved in all types of crimes. That same month Douglasville experienced its first gang-related shooting. Seven suspects were taken into custody and charged with aggravated assault and Violation of the Georgia Street Gang and Terrorism Prevention Act. Between March 2007 and June 2007 at least 25 juveniles and adults were charged in Douglasville with violating the gang laws. After interviewing the suspects in these cases, the Douglasville Police Department Gang Unit discovered that many did not have a clear understanding of the Georgia gang laws and or clear direction in their life.**

**The knowledge gained by the Douglasville Police Department Gang Unit from surrounding jurisdictions coupled with the fact that many of the local youth had not been educated in the gang laws determined the need to take a pro-active approach. The Douglasville Police Department Gang Unit’s mission was then upgraded from gang member identification and apprehension to also provide education to at-risk youth and their parents to prevent gang membership.**

**Captain Gary Sparks and Sergeant Ken Winklepleck decided that the best way to create a gang prevention program was to recruit a person who had first hand experience with**

gangs, not from a law enforcement perspective but from having lived through the experiences of being a gang member himself.

Arthur Powell filled that need, having served 11 ½ years in prison for his gang-related activities during the mid to late 80's. Powell was a member and an enforcer of the infamous Atlanta street gang, "I Refuse Posse." While incarcerated, Powell began to realize how lucky he was to have survived his experiences as a drug dealing gang member, whose gang had committed armed robberies and other violent crime. Based on his experiences, Powell created a strategy and a training program specifically targeting youth at an impressionable age from going down the same path he did many years ago.



**"Arthur Powell"**

# E.x.G.R.E.S.S.

Chief Whisenant was presented with the merits and potential of the proposed program and immediately decided to dedicate drug funds to create a partnership with Arthur Powell and his "E.x.G.R.E.S.S." (Ex-Gangstas Revering Experiences Suffered in Surroundings) consultants. In June 2007 the Douglasville Police Department sponsored its first gang prevention program called "Youth Against Violence". The program is structured to last eight weeks, but is extended to 10 weeks during the summer months. Workshops are one day a week lasting 4 hours, and cover various topics to include:


## •Gangs

Objective	Content Outline	Measurement
Facilitator will lead youth in accomplishing the following:  1. Understanding the dangers of street gang involvement 2. Conduct self-evaluation of their associates & friends 3. Develop bond building, opening up, and affirming skills with peers, parents, & law enforcement 4. Create action plan to say no to gangs	1. Define street gangs & gang law 2. Identify how street gang involvement affects your personal, professional, and community life 3. Identify methods of intervention & prevention for parents 4. Test youth gang knowledge	1. Youth will be able to avoid the lure of gangs 2. Youth will be more comfortable engaging in support groups 3. Youth will become more involved in positive programs & activities 4. Youth will be able to apply new gang knowledge to decision making about gangs and encourage others to do the same

## •Drugs & alcohol

Objective	Content Outline	Measurement
<p>Facilitator will lead youth in accomplishing the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understanding the dangers of drug &amp; alcohol abuse</li> <li>2. Conduct assessment drug usage by friends &amp; peers</li> <li>3. Create an action plan to avoid drug abuse</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define drugs &amp; alcohol</li> <li>2. Define drug &amp; alcohol laws</li> <li>3. Identify drugs &amp; alcohols affect on your personal, professional, and community life</li> <li>4. Test youth drug &amp; alcohol knowledge</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth will be able to identify the different types of abused drugs</li> <li>2. Youth will understand drug laws including “actual” vs. “constructive” possession</li> <li>3. Youth will be comfortable discussing these topics with others including parents</li> </ol>


## •Conflict resolution

Objective	Content Outline	Measurement
<p>Facilitator will lead the youth in accomplishing the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understanding the term “conflict resolution” and why it is important</li> <li>2. Conduct a self-assessment on what makes them angry and how they can deal with it</li> <li>3. Learn that violence is not the answer to solving conflict</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define conflict resolution</li> <li>2. Identify how conflict resolution affects your personal, Professional, and community life</li> <li>3. Conflict resolution scenarios</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth will learn different strategies to resolve conflicts</li> <li>2. Youth will learn that only negative results come from violence</li> <li>3. Youth will be comfortable sharing and applying strategies with others including their parents</li> </ol> 

## •Ethics & Values

Objective	Content Outline	Measurement
<p>Facilitator will lead youth in accomplishing the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understanding the term “ethics &amp; values”</li> <li>2. Conduct a self-assessment</li> <li>3. Develop a view of different concepts</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define ethics &amp; values</li> <li>2. Identify how ethics &amp; values affect personal, professional, and community life</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth will be able to list some universal norms</li> <li>2. Youth will be more comfortable sharing their values with one another</li> <li>3. Youth will learn what you do comes back to you through karma and the results of a domino effect</li> </ol>

## •Teen suicide

Objective	Content Outline	Measurement
<p>Facilitator will lead youth in accomplishing the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understanding the seriousness of teen suicide, the world is not a better place</li> <li>2. Conducting a group discussion why it happens</li> <li>3. Developing self-love</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define teen suicide and the results of it</li> <li>2. Identify personal, professional, and community resources that can help people work their problems &amp; feelings out</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth will be able to reassess their self-worth</li> <li>2. Youth will become more comfortable engaging in a support group</li> <li>3. Youth will be able to identify the signs of a potential suicide victim</li> <li>4. Youth will develop a plan to assist fellow peer group members in dealing with their problems</li> </ol> 

Other workshops include:

•Violent crime •Parole & Probation •Financial development •Nutrition •College prep  
 •Decisions & choices •Non-violent communication •Grief & Loss  
 & more...

These workshops are intended to teach young people life skills, which they can apply to their daily challenges, and are geared to encourage the youth to then share their knowledge

with their peers in hopes that they too will make better decisions and choices. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in each workshop and are given tests on the materials covered to insure each and every student has a clear understanding of the topic of discussion. At the conclusion of the session a graduation ceremony honors the students for their participation with their family in attendance.



The first session had 32 students between the ages of 10 and 18 years, who all graduated. Considering input from the students who participated and their parents, it was determined that many of the youth had changed their negative opinions about police and society, and had in fact developed a bond and an elevated level of trust for the officers. In contrast the students developed negative opinions about gangs and other criminal activity including drug use. They realized that law enforcement was concerned about their successful transition into adulthood and not only concerned about sending them off to prison.

In addition to praise from parents and attendees, the program was getting a lot of attention from the local judges, media, ministries, and civic organizations. The support from the judges in Douglas County is evident by the ever-increasing number of troubled youth ordered to attend the workshops as a condition of their bond. The Douglas County Sheriff's Office has also realized the potential of the "Youth Against Violence Program" and asked to join forces. Due to its overwhelming success it was decided to fund and host the program throughout the entire year, from hereon. The Douglasville Police Department Command Staff felt strongly that the youth in the community needed constant and consistent reinforcement to make right decisions and have a true understanding of the laws, and the responsibility of being a good citizen. Everyone involved believed that continuing this program could only have a positive impact on the juvenile crime rate. To date, 250 students have graduated from the workshops. Roughly half have been court ordered and the rest have enrolled voluntarily. A sizable percentage of our graduates even work as peer mentors for new students in new classes. A lot of new students are enrolling because they learned about the program from their friends who were attending the course previously.

A number of community leaders and celebrities have joined our efforts and conduct motivational speeches at our workshops. Speakers include Rep. Tyrone Brooks, Rep. Roger Bruce, boxing heavyweight contender Kevin Johnson, Rapper Clifford Harris a.k.a. T.I.P., Author and motivational speaker Chris Garris, and Tuskegee airman Pouncey Hill. We also have speakers from local agencies and businesses that include the Douglas County



**District Attorneys Office, Juvenile Court, Department of Children and Family Services, and others.**



**Boxing Heavyweight Contender Kevin Johnson**



**State Representative Tyrone Brooks**



**Former Councilman Henry Mitchell**



**Tuskegee Airman Poncey Hill**



**Rapper Clifford "T.I." Harris**



**Councilwoman C. Holmes**

In closing, “Youth Against Violence” has created a force in the community that is committed to making Douglasville a safer place. It has created a bond between law enforcement and the citizens. It has created a positive and safe atmosphere for the youth to learn life skills to help them make better choices and decisions for their future....and ours.

